

That \$1 note only buys the bill collectors' blues

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to questions about paper money, an always popular keepsake.

Q—Stop the presses! I got a \$1 Federal Reserve note with an odd shade of blue on the back side, rather than green. How much might this rarity be worth?

T.P., Highland Park

A—Restart the presses because your bill has no value to collectors. The green ink on U.S. currency sometimes changes color when exposed to an acid, bleach or soap. Collectors shun such doctored money.

Q—For several years I have owned a thousand-dollar bill of series 1934. Does it have value other than face value? Would I be better off investing the funds to get some interest?

M.S., Chicago

A—The federal government last issued high-denomination bills (\$500, \$1,000, \$5,000 and \$10,000) in the 1940s. Nevertheless, most specimens still command only modest premiums on the hobby market, in part because few people can afford to collect such money. The item you described sells for about \$1,100 if in "extremely fine condition."

In short, your money probably would do much better earning in-

terest in a savings account.

Q—Is it safe to assume that my \$1 silver certificates without "In God We Trust" on the back side are misprints?

B.N., Gary, Ind.

A—No. Those words are missing from all currency printed before the mid-1950s, when Congress passed a law ordering that the motto be added to paper money. Series 1957 silver certificates were the first bills in circulation with "In God We Trust" on the back side.

Q—What does the eye mean on the back side of our \$1 bills?

C.C., Evanston

A—It signifies an all-seeing deity; the words "annuit coeptis" can be translated "God has favored our undertakings." They are part of the Great Seal of the United States, which was adopted in the 1780s.

Q—Is there an easy way to determine if a coin truly is "uncirculated" from one that's "about uncirculated"?

A.R., Chicago

A—Uncirculated coins can show no trace of wear on either side. To make an identification, check the highest points of the design, such as Lincoln's cheekbone on the cent or Washington's hair on the quarter. Don't be fooled by coins that look bright and new.